In the Claims:

Please add new claim 24 as follows:

24. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein said expressed Insulin-like Growth Factor I is a translation product of an alternatively processed RNA.

Please amend claims 1, 7, 8, and 9, as set forth below. A "marked-up" copy of the claims indicating the changes is attached hereto.

1. (Amended) A method of increasing vertebrate muscle mass and muscle strength, said method comprising administering a muscle enhancing dose of an isolated nucleic acid encoding Insulin-like Growth Factor I (IGF-I) intramuscularly into a vertebrate, wherein said isolated nucleic acid is expressed in muscle cells, thereby increasing said muscle mass and said muscle strength in said vertebrate.

7. (Amended) An isolated nucleic acid comprising a vertebrate Insulin-like Growth Factor I (IGF-1) coding region, operably linked to a muscle specific promoter/regulatory region, wherein said IGF-1 coding region is flanked on the 5' side by an SV40 intron sequence and wherein said IGF-1 coding region is flanked on the 3' end by an SV40 polyadenylation signal sequence.

8. (Amended) The isolated nucleic acid of claim 7, wherein said muscle specific promoter/regulatory region is selected from the group consisting of the myosin light chain 1/3 promoter/enhancer, the skeletal α-actin promoter, the muscle creatine kinase promoter/enhancer and a muscle specific troponin promoter.

9. (Amended) The isolated nucleic acid of claim 8, wherein said muscle specific troponin promoter is the fast troponin C promoter/enhancer.